NETWORK-BUILDING, ETHNICITY AND VIOLENCE IN TURKEY*

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In November 1996, near the Turkish town of Susurluk, in a banal car accident, a Mercedes going at 180 kilometers per hour, crashed into a truck. Three of its passengers died instantly : Abdullah Çatli, a well-known radical-right militant sought by Interpol for 18 years for his involvement in more than a dozen homicides, Gonca Us, his second wife to whom he had been wed only in a religious ceremony,[1] and Hüseyin Kocadag, a high ranking member of the Istanbul police.[2] Sedat Bucak, head of a Kurdish tribe, very close to former Turkish Prime Minister Mrs. Tansu Çiller, and a deputy of her party, survived. The car was full of sophisticated unlicensed weapons.

The testimonies and press reports on the passengers of the crashed Mercedes revealed that they were in fact part of a "gang" (*çete*), composed by members of the security forces, politicians and radical-right militants. They also emphasized that the "gang," baptized the "Susurluk Gang" after the accident, was only one of the nine "Uniformed gangs" ("*Uniformali Çeteler"*) operating in Turkey.[3] In many cases, the gangs were manipulated by one of the state's coercive organs; but in turn, they also used the state for logistic support and as an immunity shield for their autonomous activities. The public in Turkey was shocked. The naked reality was there: the long-running surrealistic rumors about the "Gangs" and the two famous "Reports" written by Mehmet Eymür, a high ranking intelligence officer, appeared to be true![4]

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1 Gonca Us was also "Miss Cinema" of 1991.

2 H. Kocadag seems to have been a member of the Lolans, one of very few pro-state Kurdish-Alevi tribes (based in Varto). During his career Kocadag was awarded with 9 mentions and 332 months' salary in bonuses. He was also a member of the Directory Board of the Sports Club Fenerbahçe.

According to an investigator, Kocadag was involved in 22 cases of homicide and/or torture. As a shareholder of the gambling market, he is believed to have left a heritage of 200 million of dollars to his family. See S. Hiçyilmaz, *Susurluk ve Kontrgerilla Gerçegi,* (Istanbul: Evrensel Basim-Yayin, 1997), p.19. Kocadag was very active in the Kurdish regions and according to Mehmet Agar, his boss: "given his Alevi origins, he served as a safety-valve towards the extremists from this camp" (M. Agar's testimony in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *TBMM Susurluk Arastirma Komisyonu Ifade Tutanaklari*, (Istanbul: SCALA Yayincilik, 1997), p. 270)).

3 For their list and some of their members, cf. E. Berberoglu, *Susurluk. 20 Yillik Domino Oyunu*, (Istanbul: Iletisim, 1997), p. 22. Berberoglu's work is the best account of the events linked to the "Uniformed gangs".

4 Mehmet Eymür has been one of leading figures of the Turkish intelligence services for decades. For his first report, written in 1988, his memoirs : see, M. Eymür, *Bir MIT Mensubunun Anilari*, *Analiz*. (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayinlari, 1991/1997). This report has been published *in extenso* in *MIT Raporu Olayi*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1988). His second report, from 1996, has been reproduced --also *in extenso*-- in E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.* Both reports, classified "top secret," have been "leaked" to the press --most probably-- by Eymür himself. They accuse the Istanbul police of a long list of crimes and mention the names of many politicians involved in illegal economic activities. According to Eymür's second report, some right wing militants have had been used as a "strike force" by the Istanbul police and Mehmet Agar, chief of the Turkish police forces. (For other reports confirming these allegations and the collaboration between the security forces and the Mafia, cf. among others : "Polis-Mafya Karniyarik Tarifesi," *Hürriyet*, 21 June 1996)).

The Susurluk Accident confirmed some of Eymür's allegations. The testimonies and confessions delivered after the accident, the "secret reports" and the tape recordings, elegantly

Although almost no juridical action has been taken against the Gangs' hundreds of living members, the testimonies submitted to an *ad hoc* Parliamentary Inquiry Commission and two official reports, prepared respectively by this Commission and by Kutlu Savas, an inspector charged by the Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz to investigate the allegations, brought quantities of evidence on the links between radical-right wing militants, the state and Mafiosi groups. They have also shown how during the 1990's the radical-right militants were used by the state as "death squadrons."

As far as social scientists are concerned, these rich data have prompted many new perspectives on the comprehension of Turkish political life and the state coercion and civil violence which have dominated it for the past two decades. They allow also a better understanding of the Turkish policy making processes as well as the structuration of Turkish political life at different levels (local, nation-wide, regional and "international"). Finally, they shed new light on the country's ethnic relations, disclosing the link between ethnicity and violence, and at the some time, revealing the limits of ethnicity as the sole criterion of network building or policy making.

Among many research directions suggested by these new data, I will explore **two, developed in the final section of this article. The first one concerns State and power relations in Turkey -and in many Middle-Eastern countries-. While admitting fully, that State-coercion remains efficient in the "management" of the social issues, I will argue that the state-based sociology is of mediocre utility in explaining the Middle Eastern societies. Furthermore, I will suggest that in the understanding of the Middle-East, the research should move from the analyze of the state towards that of the power structures and relations. The second research direction concerns the network-building process as a constant production and re-construction of "modern", "nation-wide" power structures and relations in Turkey**. The analysis of the formation and in some cases, the decline of solidarity networks, their transformation and their reactivation by competition to access to economic, political, and military resources constitutes, to some extent, the focus of the other above-mentioned political processes and phenomena, such as the state's coercion and civil violence as well as ethnic relations.

In order to understand these power-structures and these network building processes, I will use, among many personal and collective biographies which could have been significant, only three. This methodological choice is partly imposed by the material impossibility of taking into account the "Uniformed gangs" in their entire complexity: they count hundreds of members and they have operated for more than two decades. No investigator has been able to give a coherent and complete inquiry of their activities and links in Turkey and abroad.[5] Challenged by the quantity of information to deal with, researchers need a tool that would enable them to understand this phenomenon by some degree of simplification. Biography is one of those instruments. Using biographical notes can allow us to understand, through personal stories, different patterns of group constructions, political action and social structuration.

The first biography that I will present in three distinct phases, is that of Abdullah Çatli, the most famous member of the "Susurluk Gang," although he was probably far from being its most powerful element. His network is the product both of an ideological commitment to the radical right and of a primary and secondary socialization first, as a teenager, in an Anatolian province, and later in Ankara and Istanbul during the 1970's. The network grew through new links, both in Turkey (with state organs and Mafia groups) and abroad (contacts with the Italian Gladio).

The second short biography is that of Sedat Bucak. The origins of Bucak's network are to be found in a blood solidarity or in a tribal *asabiyya* to use a key concept of Ibn Khaldun and in the clientelisation of other tribes. Under the leadership of Sedat, the Bucaks, a small tribe of some 20,000 people, were able to found a private army of some 10,000 men. The tribal solidarity link was successfully used to build a nation-wide patron-client relations web, allowing the Bucaks to play a large role in the allocation of military and economic resources allocation. In this web, the Bucaks were both patrons and clients.

The final brief biography is that of Behset Cantürk (assassinated in Istanbul by the "Susurluk Gang" in 1993). His network although much less structured than the two others, was based on a Kurdish ethnic solidarity, with some Armenian affinities as well as a specific "godfather's ethos," combining bravery and generosity. Cantürk and other Kurdish "godfathers" were proud of their affiliation and their financial support to Kurdish nationalist organizations. However, in order to

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"communicated" by different rival actors and secret services to the press showed that Eymür had been underestimating the phenomena of the gangs and was, in fact, hiding some crucial details linked to his own activities.

[5] Mainly Bulgaria, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, United-States, Costa-Rica, the former Soviet-Union, Cyprus.

succeed, they also had to build bridges with some groups and key men within the state (like the military general Sahinkaya or Sükrü Balci, chief of the Istanbul police).

The Young Çatli

The first network is that of Abdullah Çatli. Çatli was both a leader and a hired hand in the Turkish radical right movement. It is not within the scope of this paper to analyze the evolution of this movement;[6] suffice it to say here that the enigma of its success has less to be sought in its ideological premises than in its ability to use Central Anatolian Sunni provincial dynamics and various kinds of solidarity networks, and to offer means of social and economic ascension to many of its young members. Thanks to this sociological strength, the radical right could became, under the leadership of the Colonel Türkes, an important agent in the political violence experienced in Turkey in the 1970's and an important political force --some 10% of the electorate-- in the 1990's.

Born in 1956 in Nevsehir, Çatli has been socialized in this middle-size Central Anatolian town, which was then dominated by the radical right. Possessing, undoubtedly, a personal charisma, he became an "idealist" (*ülkücü)*, a term designating the radical right militants, at the age of 14[7] and soon rose to their leadership rank (he was called *reis* by his entourage). Some of his friends --or, pupils-- like Ömer Ay, a well-known hitman of the radical right during 1970's or Ali Serit, another violent militant, were also from Nevsehir. This common origin, involving the solidarity link called *hemsehrilik* --having the same geographic background-- and a shared militant life, contributed in great part to Çatli's ascension in the right-wing ranks. But in Nevsehir, he also met people from other Central Anatolian provinces who were working as civil servants, and were also committed to the radical right. Ibrahim Sahin, a policemen who obtained false passports for the radical-right militants[8] was one of them. As we will see, Sahin would play an important role in Çatli's life until 1996. Hamit Gönenç, originally from Malatya, who, as a schoolteacher, could provide special services[9] to his pupils, was also committed to the same movement.[10]

Çatli left Nevsehir in the late 1970's and underwent a second period of socialization in the Turkish metropolitan cities of Ankara, where he was promoted Number 2 of the Young Idealists at the age of 21, and Istanbul, where he joined young radical-right militants from Nevsehir and other Central Anatolian provinces, namely Malatya. He was adopted by the Idealists from Malatya like Oral Çelik, Mehmet Sener and Mehmet Ali Agca. Çatli soon brought them together as a unified group. Çatli's connections with the Nevsehir police allowed him to protect his group members, offering them logistic support and false passports. During his life in Istanbul, Çatli used both the *hemsehrilik* ties among the people from Malatya and his political links with the leaders of the radical right movement as Muhsin Yazicioglu. Through these links, he contacted the godfathers from Malatya, namely Abuzer Ugurlu and Bekir Çelenk. A novelist writing about this period attributes the following remarks to Ugurlu: "we, the people of Malatya, gather together today. The "heroes" (*yigitler)* all come from Malatya. Only Abdullah is from Nevsehir. But he is assimilated to the people of Malatya."[11]

From 1978, while maintaining their autonomous activities, the radical right groups, that of Çatli in particular, also acted as mercenaries for these godfathers. There were a number of factors that pushed them towards such a collaboration: the radical right militants performed the dirty work, and in turn, the Mafia leaders offered them positions, protection, money, and sections of the drug market in order to supplement their scarce financial resources. As Lokman Kondakçi, an ex-militant, confesses: "in our community, we were feeling the need to find money and weapons for the coming civil war. Heroin was the easiest way. It brought some 35-40,000 DM per kilo.»[12]

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6 For the best account on the radical right movements in Turkey, see. T. Bora & K. Can, *Devlet-Ocak-Dergâh. 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareketi*, (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 1991).

7 S. Yalçin, D. Yurdakul, *Reis. Gladiyo'nun Türk Tetikçisi*, (Ankara: Öteki Yayinlari, 1997), p. 48. According to his hagiographer, he turned *ülkücü* following a dispute on Darwin with his teacher of biology (L. Yildiz, *Bizim Çatli*, (Kayseri: Karaca Yayim-Dagitim, 1997)).

8 S. Hiçyilmaz, *op.cit*. p. 27. Ibrahim Sahin later became the vice-president of the Special Operations' Bureau.

9 Such as hiding them in the school building or providing them with better grades than they deserved.

10 S. Yalçin, D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 117.

11 H. Uysal, *Devlet-Ülkücü-Mafya. Kurtlu Kokteyl*, (Istanbul: Öteki Yayinlari*,* 1996, first edition : 1990).

12 L. Kondakçi, in S. Parlar, *Kontrgerilla Kiskacinda Türkiye*, (Istanbul: Bibliotek Yayinlari,

The still mysterious assassination of Abdi Ipekçi, the well-known Editor in chief of *Milliyet*, in 1979, by the Çatli group was a result of this close collaboration between the radical right and the Mafia. Ipekçi, a moderately left oriented thinker, was clearly not liked by the radical right, but this antipathy was not enough to transform him into their target. The reason for his assassination was, most probably, his ongoing investigations into the underground economy and the Mafia's activities. After the assassination of Ipekçi, Çatli, who was the head of the team, also participated in the escape of Mehmet Ali Agca, the officially recognized killer who was also his subaltern, from the high security prison where he was jailed. He hosted him, found him a passport through his Nevsehir connections, and thus provided him with the means to leave Turkey.[13]

In the late 1970's Çatli, hitherto a well-known leader of the young *ülkücü*, was in charge of two teams; one specialized in the escape of radical right militants from prisons, while the other formed real death squadrons, which terrorized left wing militants and shoot up their coffee houses.[14] Çatli's arrest in 1978 interrupted briefly his activities. But as a protest, Muhsin Yazicioglu, his immediate boss and top-ranking member of the "*Ülkücü* Youth," gave an ultimatum to the security forces, threatening them to put 150 bombs in different places if Çatli was not set free.[15] After the explosion of the first bombs, Çatli was released and, subsequently organized at least two big operations: the assassination of seven left wing students in Bahcelievler in Ankara[16] and the massacre of leftist Istanbul University students in March 1979.[17] In this second strike, he used dynamite received from an army officer.[18] As Mustafa Pehlivanlioglu (executed after the 1980 coup) admitted, the militants under his command committed many other murders.[19] Commenting on the activities of Çatli during these years, Mehmet Eymür, the author of two famous reports, explains why he and other intelligence authorities still "used" him during the 1980's and 1990's: "The Intelligence Agency uses all kinds of men. In other words, if the high interests of the state require it, we use them without taking into consideration if they are good or bad people, if they are criminal or not.»[20]

Çatli in "exile"

Although its main target was the radical left organizations, the coup d'État of 1980 also stopped radical right activities, imprisoned many of its leaders and executed two of its militants. The military regime did however protect some of them and allow them to leave the country. Once in Europe, they were offered "services" by the Turkish authorities.[21] Çatli was one of those who benefited from this arrangement. Only a few days after the coup he moved to Bulgaria, which, although a socialist country, was one of the most important meeting points of the Turkish godfathers and radical right.[22] In Bulgaria, Çatli became involved in the smuggling. After Bulgaria, he traveled around in other European countries, including Austria, Switzerland, Germany and France.[23] In each of them, he and his friends were welcomed by the associative network of the

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1997), p. 399, cf. also, "L. Kundakçi : Cinayetlerden Türkes'in Haberi Vardi," *Hürriyet*, 12 May 1997.

13 M. A. Agca recognizes his debt towards Çatli : "that was normal, because we were in a civil war". Interview with H. Denker, "Çatli'nin Evine Misafir Oldum," *Sabah*, 25 December 1996.

14 For this period, cf. A. Yurtarslan, *Itiraflar. MHP Merkezindeki Adam Abdullah Çatli'i Anlatiyor*, (Istanbul, Kaynak Yayinlari, 1997, first edition, 1980).

15 Ali Yurtarslan, *op.cit*., p. 90.

16 On his role cf. H. Kirca's testimony in the military tribunal in C. Dündar, C. Kozdagli, *Devlet Içinde Devlet*, (Ankara: Imge Yayinlari, 1997), p. 12 and his "boss," M. Yazicioglu, in H. Hiçyilmaz, *op. cit.,* p. 26.

17 C. Dündar & C. Kozdagli, *op.cit.,* p. 83-84.

18 Cf. A. Yurtarslan, *op.cit*.

19 C. Dündar & C. Kozdagli, *.op.cit.,* p. 88 ; for long excerpts, cf. S. Parlar, *op.cit.* pp. 459-469. For excerpts of another right-wing militant's testimonies, see. I. Çiftçi, cf. S. Parlar, *op.cit.*, pp. 494-500.

20 "Eymür : Savasi PKK Ögretti," *Hürriyet*, 6 January 1997. Sönmez Köksal, head of the MIT --National Intelligence Agency-- adds : "do you think that MIT always works with respectable people?" (K. Savas, The Second Susurluk Report, *Basbakanliga Sunulan II. Susurluk Raporu.* (Istanbul: Bir Yayincilik, Yöre Yayincilik, 1998), (obtained through the Internet (http://www.sabah.com.tr)).

21 Cf. O. Çelik's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *op.cit*., p. 213-214.

22 Cf. among others, H. Uysal, *op.cit*.

23 U. Mumcu, *Papa-Mafya-Agca*, (Ankara: UM:GA, 1996, first edition, 1984).

radical right, headed by Serdar Çelebi, which supplied them with protection as well as financial and logistic support. There are also allegations that some sports clubs linked to the radical right, namely the *Türkiyem Spor* in Berlin, also hosted them.[24] In Europe --probably under the pressures of the Turkish authorities,-- Çatli's relations with Alparslan Türkes, the historical chief of the radical-right movement deteriorated,[25] but he undoubtedly remained the chief of his own team, of which Agca and Çelik were also members. In 1981 they organized their first international action: the attempt to kill the Pope. This mysterious and very complex action was most likely perpetrated on behalf of the Italian Gladio and Mafia.[26]

In 1982, Çatli was arrested in Switzerland for his involvement in the attempt to kill the Pope, but he then (mysteriously) escaped from prison. His destination, this time, was the United States and Latin America. Although actively sought by Interpol, during these new travels he used passports bearing his real name. In Latin America he was accompanied by Stefano della Chiaie, one of the leading figures of the Italian Gladio, known also as "il Cocolo."[27] Very little information is available on Çatli's "American period," but he seems to have received counter-insurgency training in Costa Rica.[28] After his return from Latin America, he was offered "a holiday" in Turkey and traveled back to Europe. In Marseilles and Alfortville, he participated in the sabotage activities against the Armenian community in France.[29] This new series of activities undertaken by Çatli was a part of what Mehmet Eymür describes as "a blood feud decided by the state."[30] As a reprisal for the assassination of its representatives and tourists abroad, the Turkish state did, in fact, decide to strike back.[31] But this "blood feud" was not the only reason for its use of the radical-right militants in Europe. For the Turkish authorities, the hatred these militants felt for the Armenian community could be used for another aim: to divide the radical-right militants abroad by reminding some of them of their "national duties" and consequently create a pro-state faction among them.[32] In Çatli's case, however, the state's financial support --estimated at 50.000 dollars-- and prestige linked to it in no way signified that the "*Reis*" had lost his autonomy ; strangely enough, while his entourage was mainly from the radical right, his Parisian links during this period also included other people, among them at least one left-wing militant: Sarp Kuray.[33] Çatli's involvement in the drug traffic was obviously the main element of this autonomy.

This involvement in drug trafficking, considered almost a patriotic duty by Çatli's *subordoné* Oral Çelik,[34] however, cost Çatli dearly. He was arrested in 1986. After spending two years in the French Prison La Santé, he was extradited to Switzerland. After two additional years in prison, in

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24 Cf. *Hürriyet*, 11 December 1997.

25 Cf. O. Çelik's testimony, in V. Özdemir*, TBMM, op.cit.*

26 Cf. U. Mumcu, *op.cit.*

27 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.,* p. 53.

28 S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 192.

29 Cf. O. Çelik's testimony in V. Özdemir, *TBMM, op.cit.,* p. 218-219. According to a pro-Çatli author, Prof. G. Ural : "The operation against ASALA (The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) abroad, supported by MIT, was a successful one. On the one hand, the ASALA has been dismantled: on the other hand, the French people in Paris and Marseilles was annoyed. France was obliged to withdraw her support for ASALA. The Frenchmen have, however, taken their vengeance on Çatli. The arrest of Çatli with heroin on him was a result of a French plot," G. Ural, *Teskilât-i Mahsusa'dan MIT'e. Abdullah Çatli ve Susurluk Dosyasi,* (Istanbul: Kamer Yayinlari, 1997), p. 36.

30 M. Eymür, *Analiz*, p. 136. Kenan Evren, the head of military regime, refused to recognize this fact. Çatli's daughter Gökçen Çatli thus made the following appeal : "I call on Kenan Evren. Lying is a sin. I don't think that he has forgotten the past. How can he not remember the task given to my father ?" G. Ural, *op.cit*., p. 85.

31 In fact, in spite of its self-glorification (cf. O. Çelik's testimony, in V. Özdemir*, TBMM, op.cit.*), Çatli's group did not play an important role in the dismantling of the Armenian ASALA. The ASALA declined, among other reasons, because it had very little support among the Armenian community in France and because the French authorities refused to tolerate violent activities on their territory.

32 F. Sezgin, *Sistemin Intikami. Bir 12 Eylül Incelemesi*, (Ankara: Yeni Düsünce Yayinlari, 1992), pp. 113-115.

33 S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit*., p. 224.

34 "Personally, I am proud of this. I am proud because I want Europe to be poisoned, because I have a problem with Europe. I encourage this. If I were an authority, I would tolerate it, I would not arrest [the traffickers] in my country. I would not arrest them unless they poison my own people, my own youth." O. Çelik's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk, op.cit.,* p. 277.

1990, he managed to escape once again. According to his wife, six persons, among them one Turk and five "foreigners," plotted the escape[35] that marked the end of his long exile.

Turkey and the radical right at the time of Çatli's return

A detour is necessary at this point in order to understand the conditions of Turkey and of the radical right by the turn of the 1990's. In the years of Çatli's long "exile" and imprisonment abroad, Turkey underwent tremendous transformations. The economic crisis and liberalization of the 1970's and 1980's encouraged "a machismo ethic of self-help"[36] and created a category of *nouveaux riches*, who enjoyed almost legal opportunities of laundering dirty money. Drug trafficking, smuggling, and the black market became thus one of the main pillars of the Turkish economy, bringing some 25 billion dollars a year, a figure higher than that of Turkey's exports.[37] The ongoing war in Kurdistan between the PKK (Worker's Party of Kurdistan) and the army also had an important economic and political impact on the country. In 1987, the state decided to form a Kurdish tribal militia numbering some 36,000 men in the beginning of 1990's and, some 100,000 men today. In 1991 a doctrine of "Low Intensity Conflict" was officially adopted In order to fight the PKK.[38] The application of this doctrine meant, among other things, the destruction of the Kurdish countryside and the elimination of the so-called pro -PKK businessmen. But with the "Low Intensity Conflict Doctrine," the "Kurdish war" also brought considerable financial and symbolic resources for some groups: the Kurdish militia, armed and salaried by the state, the high ranking officers, the Special Teams (the so-called Ninjas), a corps 23,000 men strong, recruited mainly among the radical-right militants, and the "Confessors," former PKK militants who decided or were forced to collaborate with the state.[39]

Almost seven years after its application, one has to recognize that the Turkish "Low Intensity War" praxis was a successful one from the state's perspective: it has, for the time being at least, reduced the PKK's military activities to a peripheral area. However, it has also created new sources of conflict within the Turkish power structures. In the wake of the "Low Intensity Conflict" and the constitution of Special Teams, new, heavily armed and rival intelligence services and security forces have emerged. Before the adoption of this doctrine, MIT (National Intelligence Organization) had the monopoly on intelligence activities in Turkey. The Army also had its secret organization, the famous Kontr-Gerilla, which was particularly active during the military coups and as a general rule in the Kurdish regions.[40] During the 1980's and 1990's at least two new intelligence agencies emerged: that of the gendarmerie and that of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of the Interior. The latter, whose roots go back to the Turgut Özal era,[41] passed under the control of the ruling party of Mrs. Çiller (DYP - True Path Party). The main leading security chiefs of the country (Mehmet Agar, Ünal Erkan, Hayri Kozakçioglu and Necdet Menzir...) joined the DYP, transforming it to the "Number 1 Police academy" of Turkey.[42] Their intelligence agency, the "Special War Organization," attached to the Prime Ministry and the Ministry of the interior, functioned, to some extent as "Çiller's Special Organization," with her husband supporting some of its members or Special Teams financially.[43] The "Special Operation's Bureau"[44] of the Security forces, based mainly in Istanbul, was officially a branch of this agency; in reality, however, it seems to have built a quite autonomous organization, acting on its own behalf.

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35 S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 254.

36 The expression belongs to E. Gellner, *Nationalism*, (New York: NYU Press, 1997), p. 61.

37 Cf. K. Nezan, "La Turquie : plaque tournante du traffic de drogue," *Le Monde diplomatique*, July 1998.

38 Cf. M. A. Kislali, *Güneydogu'da Düsük Yogunlukta Çatisma*, (Ankara: Ümit Yayincilik, 1996) ; Human Rights Watch, *Weapon Transfer and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey*, (Washington D.C.: Human Rights Watch, 1995). I will analyze this aspect and the continued reproduction of official civil war doctrines, related to communism, to Kurdish nationalism and to Islam, in an article to be published in 1999 in the French review *Cultures et Conflits*.

39 They were unified in a shadow force by Cem Ersever. Cf. S. Parlar, *op.cit.*.

40 Cf. *Kontr-Gerilla Belgeleri*, (Istanbul: Aydinlik Yayinlari, 1979), S. Genç, *Biçagin Sirtindaki Türkiye. CIA-MIT-Kontr-Gerilla*, (Istanbul, Der Yayinlari, 1978), T. Sunalp (et. al.), *Marmara Brifingi. Devletin Gözüyle Sol ve Sag Örgütler*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1995, first ed. 1971).

41 T. Özal was Prime Minister between 1983-1991.

42 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit*., p.18.

43 Cf. "Special Team" members' testimonies in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *op.cit.*,

44 Numbering 8443 people, according K. Savas, (*The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.)*. In fact, their number exceeds 23.000 men.

While fighting all together in the "security field," namely in the war zones, all these agencies become completely independent from each other and from any kind of central control; this independence and the considerable military, technical and financial means they possessed allowed them to become major actors in the underground economy *lato sensu* (gambling, laundering dirty money, and weapon and drug trafficking). The PKK was not only their "enemy" but also their "teacher." As one semi-official report bluntly puts it, the state "learned" a lot from the PKK: on the military level, it learned how to conduct a war, and on the economic level, how to finance it without imposing its cost --some ten billion dollars a year-- on the public budget.[45] This "learning process" explains how in Turkey of the 1990's the drugs could be transported by the military helicopters[46] and how, to quote the second Eymür report, "under the official label of fighting the PKK and Dev-Sol,[47] a special crime organization, "using, among other techniques, "assassinations, threats, black-mail, drug and arm smuggling" could have been created.[48]

But, as the above-mentioned semi-official report reveals, two questions worried the state authorities: who was entitled to control this huge underground revenue and how would they prevent it from being used for personal purposes?[49] In fact, as one could expect, the struggle for the control of the underground economy sharpened the already conflictual relations between the intelligence agencies and the security forces. The "sweet competition" among them, as Mehmet Agar, ex-Security Boss, ex Minister of Justice and Interior, and the "protector" of the "Susurluk Gang," called it in his later testimony,[50] turned rapidly into a vendetta, involving a series of kidnappings and executions within the official spheres, partly for financial reasons. Among the high-ranking victims one can mention Abbas Hiram, described by Duane R. Claridge, a senior CIA officer, as the "finest intelligence agent" in Turkey, and by the political prisoners of 1971 military coup as a torturer;[51] Cem Ersever,[52] founder of the gendarmerie's secret service; Esref Bitlis,[53] the gendarmerie's staff general; Tarik Umit, one of the main informers of "the Special War" organization and a key name which will be mentioned again later on in this article. According to an official report submitted to the Prime Minister, in the course of the rivalry between competing intelligence agencies, over 100 officers were kidnapped, the identities of 25 of them were made public, and 15 of them were mysteriously murdered.[54] Right before the Susurluk accident a civil war within the "Special War Organization" which answered directly to the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, was about to be declared.[55]

This evolution heavily affected the radical right, transforming it more and more to a "Mafiosi" group. Already in the beginning of the 1980's the chain bankruptcy of "pyramidal investing games" (*bankerler)* allowed the Grey Wolves (another appellation of the radical right militants) to re-emerge as a force in society. The businessmen who had bank accounts in the Pyramidal Investing Games used the Young Idealists to get their funds back. The teams of the Grey Wolves, formed: "by people who knew each other from their previous actions"[56] were efficient in this financial operation. But their intervention also transformed them into a Mafiosi group, rapidly becoming capable of challenging the other established underground groups. Tevfik Agansoy[57] described this *Ülkücü* Mafia (*Ülkücü Mafyasi*) as "a group of friends of 40, 50, or 1,000 people."[58]

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45 For large extracts of the "Annual report" of the "Turkish Center of Strategic Research and Education," cf. S. Parlar, *op.cit.*, pp. 334-337.

46 Cf. the account of the trial and the accusation act of "Gang of Yüksekova," F. Balikçi, "Yüksekova Davasi Paramparça," *Hürriyet*, 8 July 1997. Cf. also, H. Oguz testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk,* op.*cit., pp*. 110-217.

47 "Dev-Sol" ("the Revolutionary Left") is a radical organization founded in 1978.

48 Cf. the full report, enclosed in E. Berberoglu, *op.cit*.

49 S. Parlar, *op.cit.*, pp. 334-337.

50 M. Agar's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *op.cit*., p. 252.

51 Cf. U. Mumcu, *Tarikat, Siyaset, Ticaret,* (Istanbul: Tekin Yayinevi, 1988), For his death, cf. M. Eymür, *op.cit.,* p. 195.

52 Cf. S. Yalçin, *Binbasi Ersever'in Itiraflari*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1994). Cf. also, The *Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.* The assassination of Ersever has been commented in the following terms by Tansu Çiller, than the prime minister : "it appears to be an internal confrontation among them [the secret services] ," E. Berberoglu, *op.cit*., p. 138.

53 Cf. A. Akfirat, *Esref Bitlis Suikasti. Belgelerle*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1997).

54 Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.*

55 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.*, p.19.

56 Tanil Bora, K. Can, *op.cit.*, p. 332.

57 Agansoy was the murderer, during 1970's, of Ümit Doganay, a respected professor. He was also a business partner of Tansu and Özer Çiller. He was assassinated in 1996 by A. Çakici,

Some of the militants, particularly those who had official contacts with state agencies and were members of the Special War Organization's "Ninjas," succeeded better than others and also gained their independence from the radical-right leadership. The case of "Yesil" testifies to this evolution. Mahmut Yildirim (alias Yesil, alias Ahmet Demir), was born in Bingöl in 1953, but he was socialized in Elazig, the radical-rights' "liberated zone" during 1970's. He was wanted for at least 8 homicides committed during this decade. In the 1990's he was involved, according to some sources, in the repression of the Alevi community in Istanbul and was later accused by Savas Kutlu, the author of the second Susurluk Report,[59] of murdering Mehmet Sincar, a Kurdish deputy, as well as at least three Kurdish intellectuals --Vedat Aydin, Serif Avsar and Musa Anter-- and of executing five captured PKK members. According to Kutlu, Yesil, who was released by the special order of Mehmet Eymür after his arrest in the 1980's, was used *tour à tour* by all kinds of security forces, the Special Teams, the police and the traditional intelligence agency. During these years he used the "VIP" facilities in his travels in Turkey and abroad. Analyzing his bank account, the Second Susurluk Report observes that: "the money has been pouring into his bank account since June 20, 1994."[60] The tape recordings of a telephone call he had with Drej Ali, one of the Mafia chiefs, in the aftermath of a "military operation" against the PKK, is the best document for understanding the mental and material conditions of a powerful former Grey Wolf:

"I don't' forbid you to do what you do. I only want you to get the point: you will not be allowed to eat alone. Nobody will be allowed to eat alone. ... Be clever. Nobody can eat alone. Did you get the point ? ... Many people do this business. I don't tell you not do it. But don't take profit alone." After having given this "lesson," using obscene and threatening language, which I have censored in this article, Yesil added that he would give Drej Ali a bank account number and wait for a money-transfer designated "to those who are unhappy with your activities," namely the "anti-drug brigade of Istanbul." Money would bring protection to Drej Ali: "If, from now on, somebody tells you anything, you will give my phone number, you will say it is Ahmet Demir's phone number. Ahmet Demir, *nom de guerre* Yesil."[61]

Çatli the final years

The case of Yesil shows clearly that the radical right militants figured hitherto in a complex web of relations involving military and civil bureaucracy,[62] going far beyond the original solidarity links of people from one town or region or the relations established during the 1970's in Ankara and in Istanbul.

Çatli's career during the 1990's is as significant as that of Yesil. After his return to Turkey, Çatli was given several official "green" passports,[63] each bearing one of his aliases, and these travel documents allowed him to make 122 trips abroad between 1994 and 1996 alone.[64] His license to carry a weapon was signed by Mehmet Agar himself, who was then serving as chief of the National police. In 1993 when the Turkish National Security Council decided to use the radical right-wing militants to eliminate pro-PKK business people,[65] it had in mind, among other names,

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another radical-right wing Mafiosi. Çakici was arrested in France in August 1998. He had in his possession a Turkish "Red Passport" reserved for high-ranked civil servants, issued by an intelligence officer (*Hürriyet,* 24 August 1998; "Turquie: A quand une opération 'Mains propres'," *Courrier international*, No.409, 1998, p. 27).

This process of "mafiaization" has naturally degraded the image of the radical right in the public opinion. But the leadership of the movement was ready to pay this price, while it brought financial resources and jobs for its militants, some of them just released from prisons without any qualification. Cf. on the "*Ülkücü Mafia*," T. Bora and K. Can, *op.cit*.

58 Quoted by S. Kutlu, *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.*

59 Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.*

60 *ibidem.*

61 N. Akan, "Iste Yesil'in Haraç Kaseti," *Aktüel*, 7-14 March 1997.

62 Recently, Yesil gave an interesting interview to *Aydinlik* (14 June 1998) in which he admitted some of his acts but accused M. Agar and other Turkish authorities of being the real "leaders".

63 Like the "Red" Passport, the "Green" Passport, reserved for the high-ranking civil servants, does not give diplomatic immunity, but facilitate traveling in Europe. No visa is required for persons holding one of these passports.

64 A. Yüksel, Head of Turkish Police, in V. Özdemir, *op.cit.,* p. 140.

65 I. Berkan, "Gladioyo'ya MGK Onayi," *Hürriyet*, 9 December 1996. Cf. also, M. Kaynak, in C. Dündar & C. Kozdagli, *op.cit.,* p. 39. T. Özal and E. Bitlis, respectively President of the

that of Çatli, a point which will be treaded later on in this article. But Çatli's activities were not limited to Turkey: he was also involved in the coup d'État attempt in Azerbaijan,[66] in the assassination attempt of A. Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, and in the sabotage activities that shook Damascus in 1995.[67]

Çatli, nevertheless, was not only an expert in sabotage activities: like other radical-right leaders, he was also able to "recycle" himself and become a respectable "politician" --according to some unconfirmed sources, he played an active role in Turgut Özal's ANAP.--[68] The "new" Çatli was also a "businessman." Hadi Özcan, an ex radical right militant known as the chief of the "Kocaeli Gang"[69] was one of his temporary partners in petrol distribution. But Çatli's business activities included also the textile industry and the production of medical instruments.[70] Mundane occasions such as circumcision ceremonies allowed him to be introduced to Turkey's "high society." His links bound him to Yazicoglu, but also to Meral Aksener, future Minister of Interior who met her husband through him. Among his other friends one can mention Sedat Bucak, the chief of the powerful Bucak tribe, and security chiefs, such Agar and Kocadag, and, naturally many Special Teams members. The majority of these people knew who was hidden behind "Mehmet Özbey," his false name. No one, however, denounced him while, as Sedat Bucak puts it: "he was the state."[71]

The "high society" was, however, not Çatli's only business environment. His financial resources also came from the racketeering of his own partners and people from the same *milieu*. One of them was Mehmet Ali Yaprak, a millionaire from Gaziantep, owner of a local television channel, and a well-known state defender in the Kurdish region.[72] The Çatli group kidnapped Yaprak, accusing him of having sympathies for the PKK. Yaprak explained that he was, rather, "pro-MHP" i.e., a sympathizer of the Turkish radical right: "Nothing could help me" adds Yaprak,[73] who was released only after having promised to pay 3 million DM.[74]

After releasing Yaprak, Çatli's gang kidnapped Tarik Umit, ex-hired hand of various godfathers whom he had betrayed without any scruple.[75] Ümit was a long-time collaborator of Eymür and one of the Special War Organization's main informers. He was believed to be truly "untouchable." It was no wonder, then, that his kidnapping created a real shock among the various intelligence agencies, but Çatli felt himself strong enough to challenge everyone, including those close to Tansu Çiller. Korkut Eken, one of Çatli's unofficial "bosses," the *de facto* Number Two of the Special War Organization in Istanbul, explains this situation: "nobody could control Çatli any longer... He was even threatening me."[76] Moreover, in the particular case of Ümit, other

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Republic and the Top general of the Gendarmerie, had been, before their untimely deaths in 1993, opposed to this decision.

66 This attempt was supported by the close collaborators of Mrs. Çiller, but the President Demirel, opposed to it, informed Haidar Aliyev, the President of Azerbaidjan, about the plot. Cf. F. Bildirici, *Maskeli Leydi. Tekmili Birden Tansu Çiller*, (Ankara: Ümit Yayincilik, 1977), p. 320. *The Second Susurluk Report* (*op.cit.)* officially recognizes the Turkish involvement in this attempt. According to well-informed sources, this attempt, which claimed 400 lives, was organized by the Turkish radical right, with the approval of Ayvaz Gökdemir. During the 1970's Gökdemir was one of the main pillars of the Turkish radical right. Since 1991 he has been a deputy of T. Çiller's DYP (cf. S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.)*. The control of oil resources and the drug market seems to be the main reason for this attempt.

67 For the participation of "Susurluk's Gang," cf. K. Savas, *op.cit.*

68 L. Yildiz, *op.cit*., p. 74.

69 Another gang including both military and civil bureaucrats. For this gang and its later conflict with Çatli group, cf. A. Yüksel, Chief of Turkish Security forces, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk. op.cit.,* p. 149 ; S. Parlar, *op.cit., p. 365.*

70 S. Hiçyilmaz, *op.cit.,* p. 27, S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 270.

71 Defense of Sedat Bucak before the Parliament, "Sedat Bucak : Abdullah Çatli'yi Ihbar Edemezdim," *Sabah*, 5 December 1997.

72 Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit*.

73 "Susurluk-Gaziantep Hatti. Yaprak : Çete Beni Siverek'e Götürdü," *Hürriyet*, 21 December 1996.

74 After his release, Yaprak was kidnapped a second time, this time by Eymür's team. This second kidnapping, however, was much less brutal. Eymür wanted to know what Yaprak had told Çatli. Cf. S. Kutlu, *op.cit.*

75 In 1985 he was wounded by one of them, cf. U. Mumcu, *Tarikat, op.cit.* p. 116

76 "Istanbul DGM'de Görülen Susurluk Davasinda Çarpici Itiraflar," *Cumhuriyet*, 25 July 1997.

troublesome elements were intervening: Ümit was not only an informer for the Special War Organization, but was also running his own drug business on the side. As Eyüp Asik, deputy from ANAP, obliged to resign in 1998 for his own involvement in a "Uniformed gang", puts it:[77] "Yes, he was our man. But at the some time, he was drawing personal advantages from the heroin business."[78]

The most important place of getting "personal advantages" for Ümit was Central Asia. According to many convergent sources, he obtained some 4.5 million dollars from the drug trafficking in Kazakhstan. The First Merchant Bank, one of his shadow-enterprises, laundered this money in Cyprus.[79] These millions were the reason behind his troubles, since Çatli was claiming his share too. After this kidnapping, Eymür contacted Ibrahim Sahin, the above-mentioned policemen from Nevsehir, who had became, by that time, an important chief of the Special War Organization, advising him: "tell Çatli to release Ümit. I warrant that he will no longer be involved in Çatli's affair or in the fields where he operates."[80] Nothing, however, could obtain the release of Ümit. He was killed in 1996.[81]

Çatli's last (known) action was the assassination of Ömer Lütfi Topal, whose name appeared, according to as-yet unconfirmed sources, on the list of the businessmen that the MGK (National Security Council) had decided to eliminate for their pro-Kurdish activities.[82] Although a non-political businessman, Topal seems to have had offered occasional financial support to Kurdish organizations and had intimate friends among the godfathers who were also known as Kurdish nationalists.[83]

Topal's father was a self-made minor-league Kurdish godfather. Topal himself had a strange personality. As a fervent Muslim, he lived an almost ascetic life, without alcohol or dining-out and he did not accept having bodyguards. He started his career as a small-time drug trafficker, an activity that landed him in prison for six years in Belgium and in the United States.[84] After his release, he changed his "profession," moving on to the gambling industry. He gained almost a total monopoly on the gambling market in Turkey, but also abroad, in Azerbaijan, in North Cyprus, and in Turkmenistan, where he was considered one of the main pillars of the "national economy."[85] His daily revenues were estimated at approximately three million dollars, which explains how he could leave an inheritance of more than one billion dollars to his wife and two children.[86]

According to his lawyer, although he had many personal enemies, Topal was "scared of Ankara" more than anything else.[87] During Behset Cantürk's funeral, he advised another Kurdish "businessmen", Nurettin Güven, to leave Turkey immediately, adding that his name appeared on the "list." If he walked around without bodyguards, the reason was simple: he knew that nothing could protect him from Ankara.

Topal was asked by the "Susurluk Gang" to pay 17 millions dollars in order to be amnestied and be excluded from the "blacklist" of the Kurdish businessmen.[88] This money was paid, but 6 of

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77 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.,* p. 95. According one source (S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit)*, Ümit had close links with the radical-left organization Dev-Sol and its leader Dursun Karatas. In fact, on one occasion, Ümit met Karatas with plans to kill him, but ended up taking heroin money from him and letting him go instead (*ibidem,* p. 321).

78 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.* p. 95.

79 Cf. under-officer Ahmet Altintas's testimony, in E. Berberorglu, *op.cit.,* 4 million DM were withdrawn from his bank account after his kidnapping, S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.* p. 321.

80 E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.,* 158. Ibrahim Sahin has also admitted this fact. Cf. his testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk. op.cit*., p. 69.

81 His body has still not been found.

82 "Hayali Ihracatçi Nurettin Güven Ölüm Listesindeydi," *Hürriyet*, 13 February 1997.

83 At least according to the MIT records. Cf. G. Telci, "Kral Öldü, Yasasin Kral," *Hürriyet*, 9 December 1996.

84 Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit*.

85 "Turkmenistan is almost conquered by the Emperyal" (Topal's casino), Cf. "Topal" section of *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.*

86 According to L. Cincüre, the laundering of money used to bring some 25% of commission to the Casino owners, (L. Cincüre, *Susurluk Romani. Devlet-Siyaset-Mafya Üçgeni*, (Istanbul: Tempo Dergisi Yayinlari, 1996), p. 60)).

87 "Metin Öney, Yasar Topçu Ortak Raporu" in V. Özdemir, *TBMM Tutanaklari. Susurluk Belgeleri*, *TBMM Komisyon Raporu'na Muhalefet Serhleri ile Birlikte*, (Istanbul: SCALA Yayincilik, 1977), p. 329.

88 *Ibidem*, p. 329, E. Berberoglu, p. 167, 172.

the 17 million dollars never reached their destination, which may explain his assassination.[89] Çatli's fingerprints were found on the weapon used in the assassination. Moreover, according to some testimonies and declarations made by Mesut Yilmaz, current Turkish Prime Minister and the leader of opposition at that time, some Special Teams participated in his murder. Those Team members arrested after the murder were then released by the special order of Mehmet Agar (and appointed to be Bucak's Bodyguards).[90]

The car accident in Susurluk stopped Çatli's activities at the age of 40. During his career of "hitman," exceeding hardly some 20 years, Çatli successfully rejuvenated himself, establishing links with political power, with radical right leaders, with the Mafia and the "Special Teams" and through them, with the security forces. A document distributed during his funeral glorified his "historical" role: "For many years our country has been engaged in an undeclared war. Çatli took part in this war... played a role and paid a price. Abdullah Çatli has fought as a sword."[91] Avni Çarsancakli, Çatli's friend and one of Mesut Yilmaz's ANAP deputies paid his own respect: "the state didn't try to arrest Çatli, it used him for its own interest. ... Çatli was brave and honest. The state needed people like Çatli."[92] Tansu Çiller also celebrated his memory : "those who shoot for the motherland, as well as those who fall for her, will be remembered with respect. They are honorable."[93]

After his death, commemorations and religious ceremonies (*mevlids*) were organized all over in Turkey and the cassettes of the elegy in his memory have sold hundreds of thousands of copies.[94] Çatli has gone down in history as a legend.

Sedat Bucak

The war in Kurdistan and the formation of the pro-governmental "Village Guards" transformed many tribes in Mardin, Siirt, Hakkari, Van and other Kurdish provinces into totally uncontrolled militia forces. It is not necessary to explain here that this "pattern" is in no way new in the Turkish history: Sultan Abdulhamid II had already organized the Kurdish tribes in a military force called the Hamidiye Light Brigades a century ago**.** What is important to underline here is that the new militia forces founded by the Republic one century later, won enough independence to attack state tribunals, free their arrested members, and in some cases, as happened with the Pinyasins or the Zeydans, to manifest a double allegiance, to the state on the one hand, and to the Kurdish guerrillas on the other. In fact, understandably, the only allegiance they have is to their own tribes. As Kamil Atak, member of the MHP (Nationalist Action Party, radical-right), head of the Village Guards, and mayor of Cizre has put it: "if the state abandons us, we will serve those who give us weapons."[95]

The Bucaks are not a unique case in this respect, although, as we will see, some features distinguish them from many other Village Guard tribes. The Bucak family was established two centuries ago near the town of Siverek in the Urfa province and rapidly marginalized the Fettahs who were dominant at the time. At the end of the 19th century, they were a part of the Hamidiye Brigades, their leader obtaining thus the title of Pasa and having an official representative in Istanbul. Since 1908 the tribe has controlled the local political life in Siverek and partly in Urfa (except for during the two waves of deportations, in the 1920's and 1960's). For the chief, the deputy position is an inherited function, coming almost automatically with the tribe's leadership. The political parties are obliged to take their electoral power into account. When during the 1977 elections M. Celal Bucak, close to Demirel, was offered only the third place in the electoral list of

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89 Cf. among other confirmations, E. Asik's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk, op.cit*., p. 608. *The Second Susurluk Report* (*op.cit*.) rejects this hypothesis claiming that: "the racketeering cannot be the reason for his assassination," but gives no alternative explanation. The report adds that: "if he had not been killed, he would have had the possibility of influencing every level of the state apparatus and all authorities [in Turkey] and within a couple of years he would have obtained a total immunity in the real sense of the term".

90 M. Yilmaz statement before the Parliament, *Susurluk Komisyonu Tutanaklari*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1997), pp. 98-108.

91 C. Dündar & C. Kozdagli, *op.cit*., p.13.

92 S. Hiçyilmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

93 F. Bildirici, *op.cit*., p. 376.

94 E. Özer & D. Oral, "Ülkücü Iki Müzisyenin 'Malum Kaza' ve 'Büyük Reis' Için Besteledigi Sarkilar Bir Haftada 20'ser Bin Adet Satildi," *Hürriyet*, 28 February 1997. Cf. also, L. Yildiz, *op.cit*.

95 "Silahi Kim Verirse Ona Hizmet Ederiz," *Hürriyet*, 17 December 1996.

Urfa, he simply organized an attack on the Justice Party's building and thereafter presented himself an independent candidate. He was elected without any partisan support.

During its long history, the tribe survived many internal conflicts and fights with other tribes. The internal vendetta of the 1960's cost 24 of its dignitaries their lives and could only be stopped through massive state interventions.[96] Later on, some of the families left the tribal structure: for instance, the descendants of Faik Bucak, who was assassinated during the vendettas of the 1960's, are now Kurdish nationalists and have no more organic links with the tribe.

As I explained in the beginning of this article, the Bucaks are a rather small tribe barely numbering 20,000 people. Moreover, as the internal vendettas and dissidence testify, one can not explain their force by an impeccable internal cohesion. In fact, they owe their strength to a complex system of kinship, alliance, and patron- client relations they have built with other tribes over the course of two centuries. The Kejans, for instance, whose chief is Sedat Bucak's brother-in-law, is a client tribe with some 2,500 "Village Guards."[97] This is also the case of Izols, Kirvars, and Karakeçilis who are other medium-size tribes of the Urfa area.

Weapons are a crucial element of the Bucak network in Urfa. To the question posed by a member of the *ad hoc* Parliamentary Commission's to know if Sedat Bucak was licensed to bear the weapons found in the car after the Susurluk accident, one of his bodyguards simply replied: "the question is silly... [because] his entire house is an arsenal full of M16, G3 and Kalashnikoves".[98] But for its militia activity, the Bucak tribe has received very little in salary.[99]

Analyzing the factors behind the maintenance of the Bucaks' army means also explaining their complex web of friendships, but also feuds, and their particular position compared to many other Kurdish tribes. Officially, their private army is against "the PKK threat." This threat dominated the tribe's life between 1977 and 1980 and its collective memory later. For the newborn PKK[100] the Bucaks were an ideal target: they symbolized both the Kurdish branch of "feudalism" and the collaboration with "Turkish colonialism", which were anathema to the PKK's founding "principles." By militarily challenging the tribe, the PKK wanted to prove that both institutions were weak. During their attacks, at least 29 men from the Bucaks have been killed. The unofficial figure is 91, with the Bucaks preferring to bury their dead secretly, without the state's involvement.

In spite of this heavy blood feud, however, Hakki Bucak, the tribe's leader during the 1980's, decided to stop the conflict with the PKK, opting for a non-war/non-peace solution. This did not necessarily mean that Hakki was "neutral"; on the contrary, he had chosen the side of the state, but without definitely closing the doors to other options, just in case.... Hakki was a "passive" supporter of the state, refusing to accept weapons from it and entering the battlefield on its behalf.

During the 1990's, however, the tribe radically changed this position. The main reason for this shift was the accession of Sedat Bucak after the mysterious death of his father to the tribe's leadership. Sedat, born in 1960, had poor political experiences, but very good connections. He knew the godfathers like Drej Ali and was well introduced into the military and security *milieu* and the members of gangs like those of Yesil[101] and Çatli. Çatli played a decisive role in establishing trusting relations between Bucak and Agar.[102] Similarly, Korkut Eken, the Colonel S. Saral and Ibrahim Sahin, vice-president of the Special Operation's Bureau visited him many times.[103] Their "investments" paid off: Sedat accepted the state's support and weapons and in turn, through his

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96 Cf. O. Sahin's novel, *Firat'in Sirtindaki Kan : Bucaklar*, (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1997).

97 Ahmet Kiran, the chief of the Kejans, demanded to be heard by the Parliamentarian Commission, but his demand was not accepted. In his testimony to journalists, Kiran accused Özer Çiller, the former Prime Minister's husband, of being a member of the "Susurluk Gang". According to him, "Sedat was manipulated by Özer Çiller". He further accused Ibrahim Sahin of arms smuggling in the Kurdish region claiming that : "he has sold thousands of weapons, for 200 million lira each". *Hürriyet*, 24 April 1997.

98 Ercan Ersoy's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *op.cit.*, p. 494.

99 Out of its 10.000 "Village Guards," only 400 are salaried by the state. The tribe pays the others itself.

100 The PKK was found in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan and some other young Kurds in 1977.

101 Yesil : "when I get bored, I go to Siverek. [Sedat Bucak] has all my sympathy. Nobody can touch Sedat Abi [Grand brother]. Even President Demirel is involved [in this affair]. Let them touch him if they dare. Who offered [weapons to Sedat] ? The state. There are written documents. How can they deny them ?" *Aydinlik*, 14 June 1998.

102 S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 284.

103 Cf. Sahin's testimony, V. Özdemir, *Susurluk. op.cit*., p. 43, as well as *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.*

testimonies to the Court, played a key role in the condemnation of DEP deputies[104] in 1994.[105] He also got involved in the Susurluk Gang's actions, including assassinations. The basement of his house in Siverek become interrogation center, where Yaprak, among other people, was interrogated by Çatli.

The second reason for Sedat Bucak's armament and the construction of his private army seems to be linked to the pressure of a Kurdish family, the Cevheris, whose leader, Necmeddin, a close friend of President Demirel, served as the head of various ministries under many governments. Algan Hacaloglu, one of Necmeddin's colleague in one of Tansu Çiller's governments, defines Necmeddin as "Southeast Anatolia's Prime Minister."[106] But the Cevheri family is also an economic power in the region, particularly in Urfa where it is in competition with the Bucaks. Necmeddin, a deputy of the DYP --as is Sedat--, is known for aiming to weaken the Bucak's influence in this province, without risking a direct confrontation with them. Transforming the Bucak's into the military target of the PKK appeared thus to be a "clever" tactic. While continuing to play a prominent role in the Turkish political arena, Cevheri's family refused to build a corps of Village Guards of its own and to receive weapons from the state. But it has done everything to oblige (or to convince) the Bucaks to do so. According to its dissident members, under the leadership of the inexperienced Sedat, the Bucaks fell easily into this trap.[107]

A third reason behind the arming of the Bucaks' is their military competition with another "Uniformed Gang," the Söylemez, which refuses to be identified as pro-PKK, but nevertheless expresses its pride in "being Kurdish." The family, which is much smaller than the Bucaks, is not from Siverek or even from the Urfa province, but from Mus, a few hundred kilometers from the Bucaks' territories. But as for the Bucaks, their activities extend throughout Turkey. By the mid-1990's, the "Söylemez Gang" was composed of 50 members, among them military officers and policemen who controlled key strategic positions, including a vice-director of the Istanbul police forces. For some reason, the family soon become, the Bucaks' target. As M. Sena Söylemez, family's "chief" put it: "The Bucaks constitute the reason for our armament... Their men wander around freely with their Kalashnikovs in Ankara and in Istanbul." Sedat Bucak is, according to him, "a Village Guards chief, going around with thirty of his men, racketeering people, eliminating those who oppose him."[108] Their refusal to accept this racketeering cost the Söylemez family dearly. Their leader and another family member were killed in April 1994, the killing that set off the beginning of their *vendetta.* M. Sena Söylemez explains: "this issue is a blood feud between my family and the Bucaks and their agents within the state apparatus. Bucak, who has the support of the state's authorities, the Village Guards, the "Confessors" [former PKK-militants], members of the *Ülkücü* Mafia, and corrupted policemen, overestimated his own power."[109] In fact, the Söylemez responded immediately by assassinating three of Sedat Bucak's cousins. Bucak's links with the security forces, namely through Agar, allowed him to imprison some Söylemez family members, without completely eliminating the risk of other heavy reprisals on their part, including, according to the some sources, the bombardment of Bucak's "fortress" in Siverek.[110]

The last, and probably the most important, reason for the arming of the Bucaks and for their involvement with the "Susurluk Gang" must be sought in their dominant position in the entire Urfa province, where they determine the shape of some 60,000 votes.[111] To some extent, Urfa can be described as the Bucaks autonomous principality: when Bucaks dignitaries come to Urfa, the city is transformed into a kind of "Far West," with streets emptying and shops closing. The Bucaks

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104 The DEP (Democracy Party), founded after the banishment of HEP (People's Labor Party), was the main legal pro-Kurdish party with some 20 members in the Parliament. Its members, among them Mrs. Leyla Zana, were arrested in 1994 and the Party was banished by the Constitutional Court.

105 Cf. S. Bucak's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk*, *op.cit.,* p. 297.

106 I. Hekimoglu, *Vatan Yahut Susurluk. Siyasi Cinayetler*, (Istanbul: Papirus Yayinlari, 1997), p. 135.

107 C. Kara, "Belçika'da Yasayan Avukat Serhat Bucak : 'Sedat Öldürülecek', *Hürriyet*, 8 December 1996, S. Hiçyilmaz, *op.cit.,* p. 58-59.

108 Cf. his interview in *Hürriyet*, 20 June 1996.

109 S. Hiçyilmaz, p. 57. S. Bucak's version on the Söylemez' : "The connections of the Mafia at the higher levels of the state have not been dismantled. Nobody could discover them. The Söylemez are organized both within the army and the security forces' head quarters," "Sok Suçlamalar," *Hürriyet*, 19 June 1996.

110 A. Yüksel, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk, op.cit.*, p. 150.

111 L. Cincüre, *op.cit.*

posses 200,000 *dönüm* of land[112] in this province, used largely for the drug culture,[113] and they hold, through the "Bucak Petrol Company"[114] a monopoly in the distribution of oil. They also largely dominate the real estate market and electricity services. In this giant irrigation field, where Urfa, the heart of the famous GAP (Southeast Anatolia Project), stands, public sector contacts are generously offered to Sedat Bucak's shadow enterprises. All these privileges bring considerable economic resources, but they also reinforce the need for protection; i.e., for a private army. Moreover, a private army is the main symbol of the power, sovereignty, prestige, and privilege assured by the state. As the second Susurluk report, prepared by the Inspector of the Prime Minister sharply suggests, the Bucak's tribe: "succeeded very well in 'marketing' its fight against the PKK, but this was only in order to preserve its existence and its structures. Through these means, it could thus hide its illegal activities."[115] It was no wonder then that while verbally remaining one of the most anti-PKK forces in Turkey, the tribe never, in fact, took any military action against the PKK. In that sense, it did not fall into the trap that Necmeddin Cevheri intended it to. Under the leadership of Sedat, the tribe's history became a real success story, observed with a high degree of jealousy by the other tribes in the region.

The Susurluk accident was in no way a bad turning point for the Bucaks. In the aftermath of the accident, they were celebrated as the "heroes" "who showed the way to stop the activities of the PKK's bandits in Southeastern Anatolia by using the Kurdish patriotic forces."[116] Their saga goes on.

Behset Cantürk

Although, to some extent, also a success story, Cantürk's case is very different from the other two cases analyzed in this article. Cantürk was the first person on the list of the so-called Kurdish businessmen to be eliminated. Within a few weeks after his assassination in 1993, some 20 people, including his close friends and his two lawyers (Medet Serhat and Tahsin Ekinci, both well-known Kurdish nationalists) were also executed.[117]

Cantürk was born in 1951 in Lice, a small town in the province of Diyarbakir, to a father who was a runner for the smugglers. His mother was a kidnapped Armenian girl. This poor background and this double ancestry, Kurdish and Armenian, would determine his conscience and his image of the world throughout his life. Considered as Armenian, i.e., Christian, in an overwhelmingly Kurdish-Muslim town, Cantürk had to prove himself, and improve his social position through courage and bravery. At the age of 15, he found the opportunity to "earn honor" by killing a man much older then him. After the incident, he was on the run for a couple of years. Later on, he was involved in other vendettas, before being cleared by the general amnesty of 1974 and establishing himself as a businessmen.

The year 1975 marked a turning point in Cantürk's life: he started a bus line and got involved in tourism. The same year, however, he also faced a personal tragedy: the earthquake in Lice destroyed the whole town, killing a few of his family members. The indifference of the authorities towards this tragedy provoked his strong reaction and became a decisive element in his politicization. While engaging in the housing industry necessary for the reconstruction of Lice, Cantürk established close contacts with Kurdish nationalist organizations, namely the DDKD (Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East). One year later, another earthquake, this time in Van, created new reasons for his politicization, but also new economic opportunities: Cantürk obtained a new contract for the construction of 1,600 houses. Rapidly, his commercial activities exceeded the legal framework: in 1977-1978, Cantürk was involved in the heroin traffic. Through Sari Avni, one of the most famous Mafia chiefs in Turkey during that period, he become a middleman in the heroin commerce between Iran, Switzerland, and Italy, before setting up his own laboratories.

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112 Approximately 50,000 acres.

113 In 1996 some Bucaks were arrested with 2 million 262 thousand kilos of hemp. After a couple of days, the tribunal decided that it was not unlawful to have hemp at home and they were released. Semih Hiçyilmaz, *op.cit.,* p. 22.

114 "Hamidiye Alayi pasaligindan Korucubasiligina : Bucaklar," *Hürriyet*, 26 February 1997.

115 Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report, op.cit*.

116 A. Kabakli, "Babamizdan Kalmasina Muhtaç Oldugumuz Seref," *Türkiye*, 12 December 1996.

117 I owe many elements of this biography to S. Yalçin, *Behset Cantürk'ün Anilari*, (Ankara: Öteki Yayinlari, 1996).

According to Soner Yalçin, his biographer, a quarter of Cantürk's revenue from the heroin trade went to the DDKD as a financial contribution. In spite of his Kurdish nationalist commitment and links with his Armenian family members in Syria --and through them, with some Armenian nationalists--, Cantürk was surprisingly not persecuted during the first years of the 1980 coup d'État. On the contrary, he was able to expand his activities, tighten his relations with Sari Avni in Europe and, with the help of the later, open a bank account in Zurich. More than 2 million dollars went through this account in the space of only a couple of weeks in 1981 alone. Without forgetting his Kurdish nationalist engagement, during the military regime, Cantürk, following the lad of other Kurdish godfathers or hired hands,[118] also established close ties with some Turkish authorities, namely Tahsin Sahinkaya, one of the five generals governing Turkey. Parts of contracts he obtained as builder are believed to have gone to Sahinkaya in the guise of commissions and gifts.[119] His other contacts included figures such as Sükrü Balci, the very anti-Communist and anti-Kurdish chief of the Istanbul police. Thanks to these links, during the harsher years of the military regime, Cantürk could prosper and, parallel to his savings in Switzerland, accumulate some 5.6 million dollars in his different bank accounts in Turkey between 1981 to 1983.

The year 1983, however, was to be a second turning point in Cantürk's career. During this year of the "softening" of the military regime, an important police operation was organized against him by the Ankara police and Mehmet Eymür. Cantürk's arrest excited mostly the Italian justice department. Together with judges from Torino, Giovanni Falcone[120] visited him in his prison in Ankara to investigate his links with Italy. Cantürk did not answer to the questions and the Turkish authorities, Eymür namely, encouraged him to refuse to collaborate in any way. In fact, what interested Eymür and the Ankara police was not at all Cantürk's involvement in the drug trafficking, but rather, his political activities --his links with Kurdish and Armenian nationalists. Moreover, through Cantürk, the main targets for Eymür and for Abbas Hiram, chief of MIT (National Intelligence Organization), were his protectors, the general Tahsin Sahinkaya, Sükrü Balci, chief of Istanbul police and Istanbul's governor Ayaz. Cantürk was only a pawn in an internal war within the state apparatus: Ankara versus Istanbul, some factions of the military establishment versus others. His ambiguous personality was weakening him, transforming him into an easy target. His Kurdishness and Armenianness, and his links with nationalists from both groups were enough to prevent anybody from defending him.

Although the drug charges against him were dropped shortly after his arrest, the charge of treason was held up. After him, his brothers, cousins and two wives were arrested. After a few nightmarish years of torture he was finally released in 1988, when Eymür and the Ankara police determined that keeping him locked up no longer served its original purpose since his protectors had been weakened by that point and were thus harmless.

After his release, Cantürk rapidly built a new economic and political network. While, with some other godfathers like Inci Baba, he was opposing the "Ülkücü Mafia" in Istanbul, he established new links with powerful individuals in the government, namely Abdulkadir Aksu, a Kurd from the Naqshibandiyya brotherhood, who was then the Minister of Interior. His position of "godfather" necessitated violence (the assassination of at least one man), but also, financial generosity vis-à-vis certain politicians. In 1993 he seems to have contributed financially to Mrs. Çiller's campaign for the leadership of DYP.[121] But, at the same time, he maintained his links with the Kurdish nationalists. He was proud to be the main shareholder of the pro-PKK newspaper *Özgür Gündem*.

In spite of his relations with some well-established authorities, Cantürk constantly lived on the edge. The year 1993, became another turning-point, though the final one, for him. This year, the main Turkish political authority, the military-dominated MGK (National Security Council), decided to declare "a total and uninterrupted war against the PKK" and "to destroy its financial resources."[122] In a report submitted to the MGK, the names of some Kurdish families and 62

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[118] Cf. the testimonies of H. Baybasin, one of these hired-hands, R. Çakir, "Baybasin'den Sok Iddialar," *Milliyet*, 27 December 1995 ; "Baybasin : Diplomatik Pasapartumu ve Polis Kimligimi Agar Verdi," *Hurriyet*, 27 December 1996 and D. Perinçek, *Çiller Özel Örgütü. TBMM Susurluk Dosya Komisyonuna Sunulan Dosya ve Belgeler,* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayinlari, 1996), pp. 181-190,

[119] S. Parlar, *op.cit.*, p. 338.

[120] G. Falcone was charged with the investigation of the Mafia's activities. His assassination in the beginning of 1990's by the Mafia is considered as the starting point of the "Clean Hands Operation" in Italy.

[121] Cf. D. Perinçek, *op.cit.,* p. 341.

[122] E. Berberoglu, *op.cit*., "Içel Milletvekili Fikri Saglar'in Komisyon Raporuna Karsi Görüsleri,"

individuals figured as the main financial supporters of the PKK.[123] On October 4, the Prime Minister Tansu Çiller declared that these people would be held accountable for their treason. Ten days later, on October 14, Cantürk was assassinated, most probably by a team run by Tarik Ümit and Çatli.[124] A crowd of 3,000 people turned his funeral into a Kurdish nationalist protest. After Cantürk, some 20 of his friends or some other godfathers like Inci Baba[125] were also killed,[126] while others like Nurettin Güven or Hüseyin Beybasin fled Turkey or decided to remain abroad.

Who benefited from the elimination of Cantürk and other members of the "Kurdish Mafia" ? First of all, the other godfathers profited. As a police officer speaking anonymously put it already in 1993: "[today] the Black Sea Mafia ... which has remained passive for the past few years is destroying the Kurdish Mafia. It is not necessary to ask who organizes this operation, but whom it benefits, who the winners and the losers are» .[127] The second beneficiaries were the "Susurluk Gang" and the "Ülkücü Mafia," which could act freely to control the "market" through racketeering it. And, finally, of course, the state, in the apogee of its policy of "Low Intensity Conflict," profited from the assassination of Cantürk and his friends. As the Second Report on Susurluk puts it, the principle of the elimination of the "Kurdish businessmen" was a decision taken by the state. "Those who acted against the unity of the Motherland deserved this heavy sanction" says Savas Kutlu, the Prime Minister's Inspector, in his report: "The only point on which we do disagree [with their killers] concerns the way of committing those assassinations and their results."[128]

Conclusions

One does not need to be very imaginative to put these brief biographic elements into an equation of the question of democracy in Turkey. In fact, the "Uniformed gangs," the "Susurluk Gang" in particular, have perpetrated more than 2,000 murders with an overwhelmingly Kurdish victim count.[129] The testimonies of Hüseyin Oguz, who served as an under-officer in the Kurdish areas, offer lengthy accounts of these extra-judiciary executions.[130]

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in V. Özdemir, *TBMM. op.cit.*, p. 421.

[123] The existence of this list has been explicitly admitted in *the Second Susurluk Report*, *cf. op.cit.,* which vaguely numbers the people on the list as "close to one hundred". Cf. also interview with N. Güven, figuring in the same list, ("Hayali Ihracatçi Nurettin Güven Ölüm Listesindeydi," *Hürriyet*, 13 February 1997.) Güven explained that he had to pay 60,000 dollars to Tarik Ümit to obtain an "official passport" allowing him to move to Great Britain.

[124] Ümit's uncle testified before the *ad hoc* Parliamentary Commission : "I think that Tarik played a role in the elimination of some people who were dangerous for the state, namely in the elimination of Savas Buldan," S. Yalçin & D. Yurdakul, *op.cit.*, p. 312. Cf. also, H. Avci's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *TBMM, op.cit.*, 1997, p. 15. According to Avci (Vice-president of the Intelligence Bureau of the Police), the elimination of the Kurdish "businessmen" left Çatli's group without any "raison d'être," explaining their later activities as kidnapping of Yaprak and assassinations of Ümit and Topal.

[125] Inci Baba, who was a close friend of President Demirel was killed in December 1993. His assassination has officially been attributed to an accident (Cf. *Milliyet*, 8 December 1993). A pro-PKK source, however, gives another account : "I have previously written that the Ministry of Public Works was in fact not headed by Onur Kumbaracioglu, the minister, but by Inci Baba and the latter distributed public contracts as he desired. Inci Baba was from Urfa. He was close to Demirel. He was one of the middle-size leaders of the *milieu*. But we observe that the rise of Kurdistan also influences the Mafia. Right before his assassination, Inci Baba sent a message to the headquarters of the Revolution and proposed to Apo [A. Öcalan, president of the PKK] to give the Revolution 3% of the commissions he received from the contracts. He was killed precisely at this moment," Y. Küçük, "Tarihte Gençlik," *Marksist Damar*, No.7, 1995, p. 26-27.

[126] Sönmez Köksal , the head of the National Intelligence Agency, commented on these killings : "We have no information on them. We only followed [what happened]. They have been killed. They died. I have nothing else to say," in V. Özdemir, *TBMM. op.cit.,* p. 102.

[127] Quoted by S. Yalçin, *Behset Cantürk'ün Anilari, op.cit.*

[128] Cf. *The Second Susurluk Report*, *op.cit.* Kutlu Savas, author of this report, emphasizes the same feelings concerning the assassination of other Kurdish businessmen.

[129] For 908 of 2377 of so-called "assassinations committed by unidentified persons," cf. *TC TBMM 10/90 Nolu Ülkemizin Çesitli Yörelerinde Islenmis Siyasal Cinayetler Konusunda Meclis Arastirma Komisyonu Raporu*, (Ankara: TBMM, 1995).

[130] "If you are a Kurd and the state decides to kill you, you will have no chance to survive,

Writing that the gangs are a very heavy mortgage on the future of Turkey as a stable country, would also be but an under-statement.[131] In fact, one has to admit that the gangs were a price that Turkey had to pay for its inability to deal with the Kurdish question as a political issue. If the war, and particularly the "Low Intensity Conflict" doctrine, have weakened the PKK, they have also created the conditions for the emergence or reinforcement of the paramilitary gangs. The political options in the Kurdish issue have been eliminated, because, among other reasons, for many involved actors, the so-called "military solution" meant financial benefits and a total independence from the central power. Initially instruments of the state, the gangs succeeded within a short period to manipulate the political sphere and the state for their own purposes. One should thus not be surprised to observe the inability of the state's authorities (in fact, the military authorities) to dismantle and disarm them. Many sources show that, while I write these conclusions, the different gangs and different camps within them are preparing for the coming battles.[132] No doubt, then, that the gangs will become one more factor responsible in the implosion of the Turkish political system if the country has to go through any fresh heavy political crises.

In addition to these political aspects, however, the analysis of the gangs allows us to draw at least two other conclusions, directly linked to issues debated by the social scientists: on the state and power relations on the one hand, on the network building on the other.

The first conclusion concerns the state and power relations in Turkey. The scholars of modern Turkey have generally accepted the Weberian tradition, which describes the Middle Eastern states, among them, Turkey, as strong, neo-patrimonial states. Both historical and sociological studies suggest the weaknesses of this tradition: **ultimately, it substitutes state's coercive power to its implementation in the social tissue and to the consensual social adhesion to its goals. It also substitutes the state's symbolical representation[133] to its effective control over the society or to its capacity to structure the society. It is obvious that the State conceives itself as a historical emanation of the "society" -if not the "nation"-, and as such, it claims to the monopoly on its representation. It is also obvious that, the State is able to create coercive, ideological and resource-distributive organs, insuring its durability through "obeisance". The real mechanisms of "legitimacy", i.e, those going beyond the philosophical and constitutional theories, those ultimately producing every-day "loyalty", however, should be sought else where than in the State: at the infra-state level, in the local entities, in the linguistic and sectarian groups and networks,[134] and, at the supra-state level, in the trans-border relations or, with the amplification of emigration towards other countries, in the transnational networks. Far from being a non-sociological actor, and while maintaining its coercive praxis as a means of production of obeisance, the state itself becomes a field of different networks, competitions, or, even, "family enterprises".**

This sociological nature of the states in the Middle-East explains the contradiction between their historical goals and their reality: while aiming at the building of nation-states by overcoming -if not, eliminating- the infra-state affinities and entities, the states are obliged to integrate them in a complex web of power structures. It is no wonder thus, that the States themselves become key-players of the patron-client relations in the entire region. This is the *sine qua non* of their durability.[135]

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even if you are more of a patriot then any body else,". H. Oguz's testimony, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk, op.cit.,* p. 125. Cf. also his accounts about the ways in which the extra-judiciary executions were carried out.

[131] As Parliament member Sema Piskinsüt has observed, the very notion of "policy making" depends on the good relations the politicians have with the gangs. Cf. "Aydin Milletvekili S. Piskinsüt'ün Komisyon Raporuna Karsi Görüsleri" in V. Özdemir, *TBMM, op.cit.,* p. 403.

[132] Cf. *Hürriyet,* 16 February 1998, *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet*, 24 September 1998. **In November 1998, the government of Mesut Yilmaz was obliged to resign for its involvement with another "gang" (that of Alaattin Çakici), and the war among politicians and security agents, by means of "leaking" information, continued throughout December 1998.**

[133] **The State is still represented in Turkey as "Devlet Baba" ("Father-State"). Cf. on the symbolic representation of the state in Turkey, H. Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (North Humberside: The Eother Press, 1985).**

[134] **Cf. L. Valensi, "La tour de Babel : les groupes de relations ethniques au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord", *Annales ESC*, n.4, 1986, pp. 817-838.**

[135] **Cf. among others, M.C. Hudson, *Arab Politics, The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven & London: Yale Univ. Press, 1977); A.K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Paesent in Persia* (London: Oxford university Press, 1969); A. Dawisha et I. W. Zartman (eds.), *Beyond***

Turkey, which disposes a strong bureaucratic establishment and an omnipresent army, and still, faces chronicle heavy social crisis and violence since decades, is an interesting case study in the Middle-East. Following the led of Ernest Gellner, one should certainly admit, that by the past, the Ottoman state constituted an "exception" in the Islamic tradition,[136] in the sense that its strength did not depend on an *asabiyya* but on a centralized bureaucratic power. One should, however, also recognize that this model came to an end already by the creation of the tribal Hamidiye Brigades in the late 19th Century. The Unionist regime, which followed (1908-1918), was also obliged to accept the autonomy of tribal entities. And, the relatively supra-social fabric -**i.e., largely isolated from the society and in no way accountable to it-** of the Kemalist and post-Kemalist[137] powers, was severely shaken during the mobilizations and violence of the 1960's and 1970's. In fact, during these decades, the process of modernization, proposed by many researchers as the *grille de lecture* of contemporary Turkish history, also increased material and political resources and sharpened the competition for access to them. Already by these decades, the vendetta as a means of conflict regulation and "political combat" as a means of becoming an actor in the provincial or national political arena were largely anachronistic. During the 1970's, the ordeal of civil, political, and communitarian violence revealed the limits of the so-called "strong" and centralized state. These years were marked by the emergence of peripheries and, more generally speaking, of provincial dynamics, of new solidarity networks and new solidarity territories, both in a real and figurative sense, in Turkish society. Their emergence aggravated the traditional suspicions against the state: the "local" entity (provincial or regional) whose autonomy was obtained by violence often become the only framework through which business was conducted. The state, on the other hand, was obliged to recognize the status of the "most favoured lords" to local "communities" and to radical militants, mainly, but not exclusively, those of the right wing, admitting thus, the autonomization of large sectors of society. Facing the "terror" coming from "below" but articulated with the internal divisions "above," the "center" had no other legitimate existence than that assured by the military.[138] **One should, however, bear in mind that the military itself has no "structural immunity" and might well fail to preserve its "cohesion" during a prolonged social crisis. In this sense, the Turkish *coup d'Etat* of 1980 aimed not only to the restoration of the State's dismantled authority, but also to the preservation of the seriously challenged cohesion of the military apparatus itself. The common belief was, indeed, that the continuation of the violence would aggravate army's internal divisions, splitting it into protagonists of a coming civil war.**[139]

Today, the emergence of various "Uniformed Gangs" does not only testify to the divorce between ideological commitments and solidarity networks, as it is shown in the case of Behset Cantürk or Tarik Ümit; it also marks a further step in the dismantling of the supra-social character of the Turkish state (**i.e., independence from infra and supra--state loyalties)** and challenges its cohesion and "immunity." The solidarity networks of the 1980's and 1990's have a much more complex texture than did the traditional tribal or religious allegiances of the past. They are capable of using the state not only at a local or provincial level --becoming mayor or corrupting a civil servant, as in the past--, but at the very level of the central power, or even from the outside, throughout multiple channels in Europe, in Cyprus, in the Middle East or in Central Asia. The central power (i.e. "political class," National Assembly, the justice system, the security forces, the army...) itself has became a battle-field of different power groups, understood both as *organized*

Coercion. The Durability of the Arab State **(London, New York, Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988); H. Bozarslan, *La question kurde: Etats et minorités au Moyen-Orient*, (Paris: Presses de Sciences-Po, 1997).**

[136] E. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). **New historical researches, suggest, however, that, even under the Ottoman rule, the local entities disposed a great autonomy. Cf. A. Raymond, "Le Caire traditionnel : une ville administrée par ses communautés", *Maghreb-Machrek,* n° 143, pp. 9-16.**

[137] **The Kemalism, as a single party-rule ended in 1946, when the political pluralism has been adapted. The "neo-Kemalism" of the later decades should be understood both as an instrument of power and as a metaphysical system of the military, the establishment and some sections of the intelligentsia. Cf. H. Bozarslan, "Political Crisis and Kurdish Issue in Turkey ", in R. Olson (ed.), *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement and Its impact on the Middle East in the 1990's* (Kentucky: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1996, pp. 135-153).**

[138] Cf. H. Bozarslan, " Chaos ou mutations sociales : Notes sur la crise turque des années 70," *Cultures et Conflits*, No. 25, 1997.

[139] Cf. K. Evren, *Kenan Evren'in Anilari*, Istanbul, Milliyet Yayinlari, 1991.

armed corps[140] and as *competitive systems of allegiance and network building,* including the gangs. One can hardly describe the state in Turkey of the 1990's as holding the "monopoly on legitimate violence." In Turkey of the 1990's, the decision to eliminate the Kurdish godfathers can be made by the state's highest authority, the National Security Council, but many other "policies," including those linked to the Kurdish issue, are no longer invented in Ankara and by Ankara. They are decided at the cross-roads of local, national and international levels of "policy making" and involve a variety of agents, **namely what the theory of international relations calls "non-state" actors**.[141]

The observation of the Turkish political life over the past century, but particularly since the 1960's, thus reveals the limits of the Weberian tradition, but also, those of a state-based sociological approach in general. The research seems to face the obligation of sliding its interrogations from the state to concept of *powers*, as Michel Foucault has suggested in other political and cultural contexts. It is urgent to study the multiplication of *powers* both inside and outside the state, their praxes and interconnections, but also their conflicts and potential risks for the implosion of the political system as a whole.

This methodological requirement[142] does not apply only to states: it is also an element necessary in order to understand the evolution of the social movements. In fact, one of the reasons for the decline of horizontal social movements[143] --which were active in many Middle Eastern countries from 1960's to 1970's-- is to be sought in the passing of the territorial framework based on the unitary nation-state, in favor of the multiplication of economic resources and of the complication of the games of political rules and allegiances. The infra- and supra-national modes of action and solidarity networks obviously take on much more intense proportions than the "national," class-based, horizontal mobilizations. The observation of the Turkish political arena brings rich information from this point of view: the horizontal mobilizations and the violence of the 1960's --and partly 1970's-- declined dramatically during the 1980's and 1990's. A high degree of ethnic and social violence during these two decades went, in fact, hand-in-hand with a high degree of social fragmentation and the fragmentation of violence itself. As a result, in some cases, the political and social violence took, as it is testified by the transformation of the "Susurluk Gang" to a Mafiosi-type group, the form of "privatized" violence.[144]

The second conclusion of this article concerns the concept of solidarity networks, understood as "groups possessing different power resources and imposing a collective regulation involving a high degree of coercion" and as "constrained and non-voluntary allegiances."[145] Many sociologists and anthropologists agree that solidarity is a constantly reproduced phenomenon in contemporary Turkish and Middle Eastern societies. But very little information is available on the concrete modalities of this reproduction. The analysis of the gangs in Turkey seems to suggest that this reproduction includes something more than a blood solidarity or a solidarity based on a common ancestry *stricto sensu*. The cases of Bucaks and Söylemez, as well as other cases, namely the tribes involved in the "Yüksekova Gang,"[146] testify that these two fundamental identity-landmarks do not disappear, but are simply not enough. If a tribal group or an extended family wants to win an extremely violent economic, political, and military competition or just to survive it, it has to become a nation-wide economic and political actor and invent something other than blood-

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[140] As K. Orakoglu, a policemen who played a key role during the army-civil government confrontation of 1997 puts it : "the army can no longer organize a coup d'État while it needs the support of 167,000 policemen. ... The military even risks provoking a civil war if it doesn't have the support of the police," quoted by E. Berberoglu, *op.cit.,* p.198.

[141] Cf. M.-C. Smouts (ed.), *Les nouvelles relations internationales. Pratiques et théories*, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 1998.

[142] This requirement does not apply only to studies on Turkey but also to those in many other Middle Eastern societies. The Iraqi, Syrian, and Algerian situations are other cases where a high degree of state's coercion and social violence does not involve a strong state and a strong social movement.

[143] By "horizontal" mobilization I mean a mobilization that involves a socio-economical and not a single community.

[144] M. Wieviroka, "Le nouveau paradigme de la violence," *Cultures et Conflits*, No. 27-28, 1997.

[145] D. Pecault, "Réflexions sur la violence en Colombie" in F. Héritier (ed.), *De la violence*, (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1996), p. 257.

[146] For this gang, composed mainly by tribal chiefs of the Hakkari province and high-ranking local military officers, cf. the testimony of H. Oguz, in V. Özdemir, *Susurluk, op.cit.,*

solidarity or a common ancestor. This "something else" is a web of complex relations, including supports found elsewhere, in other solidarity networks, but also, in other patterns of association. Such a group needs to be a part of modern political and economical equations. In other words, in order to succeed, it must abandon the "traditional" system of alliance of brothers against cousins, of brothers and cousins against the other cousins, and the whole family against the outside. As it is confirmed by the case of the Bucaks during the 1960's or during 1990's, where members of other tribes were used within the inter-Bucak conflicts,[147] a tribe must, in some situations, thus include other members in its network against its own dissidents.

In fact, the entire Bucak story is about the capability of using the *senses* and *mechanisms* of an initially purely tribal *asabiyya* to build a solidarity network of a very different kind. The Bucaks simply transferred these senses and these mechanisms in a way that they could include "foreign" members in the periphery of their group. To a certain extent, Çatli, Sahin, Agar, and many others became *de facto* members of the group and played simultaneously the role of its "protectors" and its "protégés": they protected and legitimized Sedat Bucak and his private army at the national level and equipped them with sophisticated weapons; Bucaks, in turn, supplied them *local* logistic support, economic resources and protection in their fortress and in his Urfa Principality.

This network's expansion and the transfer of the senses and mechanisms of solidarity from a narrow-framework to a wider one is not limited to tribes. The two other networks analyzed here functioned in a quite similar way. Abdullah Çatli has built his solidarity network, the *sine qua non* of his future success, in Nevsehir. But he had to enlarge it by incorporating different levels of socialization and activities in Ankara and in Istanbul in the 1970's, in Europe during the 1980's, and once again in Turkey in the 1990's. He was successful enough to keep solid bridges between these different levels and master them all. Finally, the last case, that of Cantürk, shows that the ethnicity, both in the sense of identity and element of making of a godfather, was a necessary factor in the building of a solidarity-network, but it was far from being enough. Cantürk had to expand it by including other links, if necessary with the most anti Kurdish elements of the Turkish political and military sphere.

These solidarity networks cannot be viable if they depend only on material interests. They have to invent symbols and rituals, a map of friendship relations, as well as new kinship relations and alliances. Given the vast material field in which the agents act, these relations cannot be reduced to a restricted matrimonial field and reproduce themselves in a traditional way of inter-cousin marriages or the marriage based on women-exchanges *(berdel)*. But still, they have to preserve a high degree of symbolic kinship. The most important examples of this new kind of kinship relations seems to be linked to *circumcision* and to the weddings. By using the *kirve* institution --holding a boy during the *circumcision*--, Çatli became Haluk Kirca's sons' godfather. A few years before, Mehmet Agar created a similar kind of kinship with the same Kirca by acting as witness during his wedding.[148]

These symbolic kinship relations do constitute groups, project them in the future as cohesive entities with reciprocal responsibilities among their members, and expand them by including businessmen, politicians, military officers and members of "Uniformed Gangs." They create a collective memory of the group. The system is quite flexible: for instance many politicians are able to be members of different groups, slide from one group over another, or obtain advantages in different client groups at the same time.

These advantages however are not given once, and for all, and they may not survive a period of intense crisis and conflict. More than the old kinship relations, the new solidarity networks do not mean the end of the conflicts or an absolute protection, nor the end of internal violence. The entire history of the "Uniformed gangs" illustrates that solidarity can break down at any moment, leaving the old partners with sweet memories of the past and sharpened knives of the present.

ANNEXE

THE NAMES OF THE MAIN ACTORS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

147 Cf. O. Sahin, *op.cit.*

148 Kirca, another radical right militant, is also a gang member. Cf. A. Disbudak, "Iste Agar'in Itiraflari," *Milliyet*, 18 May 1998. Kirca was also "actively" sought by the police during his wedding. Agar, then governor of Erzurum, has recognized that he accepted the invitation "on the demand of the MHP," the radical right party of A. Türkes. Kirca is believed to be the current leader of the "Susurluk Gang".

Tevfik AGANSOY: Radical-right militant. Assassinated in 1996 by A. Çakici (cf. *infra)*

Mehmet AGAR: former head of the Security forces. Former minister of justice and Interior in 1996 and 1997. Deputy since 1995.

M. Ali AGCA: Radical-right militant. Involved in the assassination of A. Ipekçi, Editor in chief of *Milliyet*, and in the attempt of killing of the Pope. He is currently in prison in Italy.

Abdülkadir AKSU: Minister of Interior from 1983 to 1989.

Sari AVNI: Godfather.

Ömer AY: Radical-right militant.

Nevzat AYAZ: Former governor of Istanbul.

Sükrü BALCI: Former head of the Istanbul police.

Hüseyin BEYBASIN: Kurdish godfather. He is currently in prison in the Netherlands.

Esref BITLIS: Top general of the Gendarmerie. Killed in an plane crash in 1993.

Sedat BUCAK: Chief of a Kurdish tribe. Deputy. Close to Mrs. Çiller.

Aladdin ÇAKICI: Radical-right militant and Mafiosi. Arrested in 1998 in France.

Behset CANTÜRK: Kurdish godfather. Assassinated in 1993.

Abdullah ÇATLI: Radical-right militant, died in 1996 in the Susurluk Accident.

Bekir ÇELENK: Godfather. Close to elements in the radical-right.

Oral ÇELIK: Radical-right militant. Involved in the assassination of A. Ipekçi and in the attempt of killing of the Pope. Extradited by Switzerland, he has been released in Turkey. After his triumphal election as president of the football club "Malatya Spor," he is now considered as a respectful "businessman."

Necmeddin CEVHERI: Politician. Minister in many governments. Deputy since the 1970's.

Özer ÇILLER: Tansu Çiller's husband. Close to the "Susurluk Gang."

Tansu ÇILLER: Prime Minister from 1993 to 1995.

Drej ALI: Godfather.

Korkut EKEN: One of the Special War Bureau's chiefs.

Ünal ERKAN: Former governor of Kurdish provinces (*OHAL Valisi)*. Deputy since 1995.

Cem ERSEVER: Founder of the Secret Services of the Gendarmerie. Killed in 1993.

Mehmet EYMÜR: One of the senior officers in the National Intelligence Organization. Author of two famous reports known as "Eymür's Report."

Nurettin GÜVEN: Kurdish godfather. Lives in "exile" in Great Britain.

Abbas HIRAM: Senior Officer of National Intelligence Agency, killed in 1989.

INCI Baba, Kurdish godfather, killed in 1993.

Lokman KONDAKÇI: Former radical-right militant.

Hayri KOZAKÇIOGLU: Former governor of Kurdish provinces (*OHAL Valisi)*. Deputy since 1995.

Necdet MENZIR: Former head of security forces in Istanbul. Deputy since 1995.

Turgut ÖZAL: President of Turkey. Died in 1993.

Hadi ÖZCAN: Head of the so-called "Kocaeli Gang ."

Tahsin SAHINKAYA: Former General Staff of Air Forces. Member of the Council which governed Turkey from 1980 to 1983.

Mehmet SENER: Radical-right militant. Involved in the assassination of A. Ipekçi and in the assassination attempt of the Pope.

M. Sena SÖYLEMEZ: Chief of the "Söylemez Gang"

Ömer Lütfi TOPAL: Godfather. "Casino King." Killed in 1996 by Çatli's team.

Abuzer UGURLU: Godfather. Close to the radical right.

Tarik ÜMIT: One of the Special War Bureau's informant. Kidnapped and killed by Çatli in 1996.

Mehmet Ali YAPRAK: Godfather. Kidnapped in 1996 by A. Çatli.

Muhsin YAZICIOGLU: Radical-right leader. Chief of a small radical-right party. Deputy.

Mahmut YILDIRIM (alias **Yesil**, alias Ahmet Demir): Radical-right militant.

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SUMMARY

In 1996 in a car accident near the Turkish town of Susurluk, a radical-right militant was killed together with his second wife and a high ranking member of the police. Sedat Bucak, a deputy and head of a Kurdish tribe survived. The testimonies on the passengers revealed that they were part of a "gang", composed by members of the security forces, politicians and radical-right militants.

These data have prompted new perspectives on the comprehension of Turkish political life and the state coercion and civil violence which have dominated it for the past decades. They shed also new light on the country's ethnic relations, disclosing the link between ethnicity and violence, and at the some time, revealing the limits of ethnicity as the sole criterion of network building or policy making.

Among the new research directions, this article explores the one concerning the network building process in Turkey. It puts into question the "State-based" sociology and suggests that the reproduction of the networks in the Middle East depends on their capability of integrating wider power-structures by using the *senses* and *mechanisms* of their initial solidarity links.

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